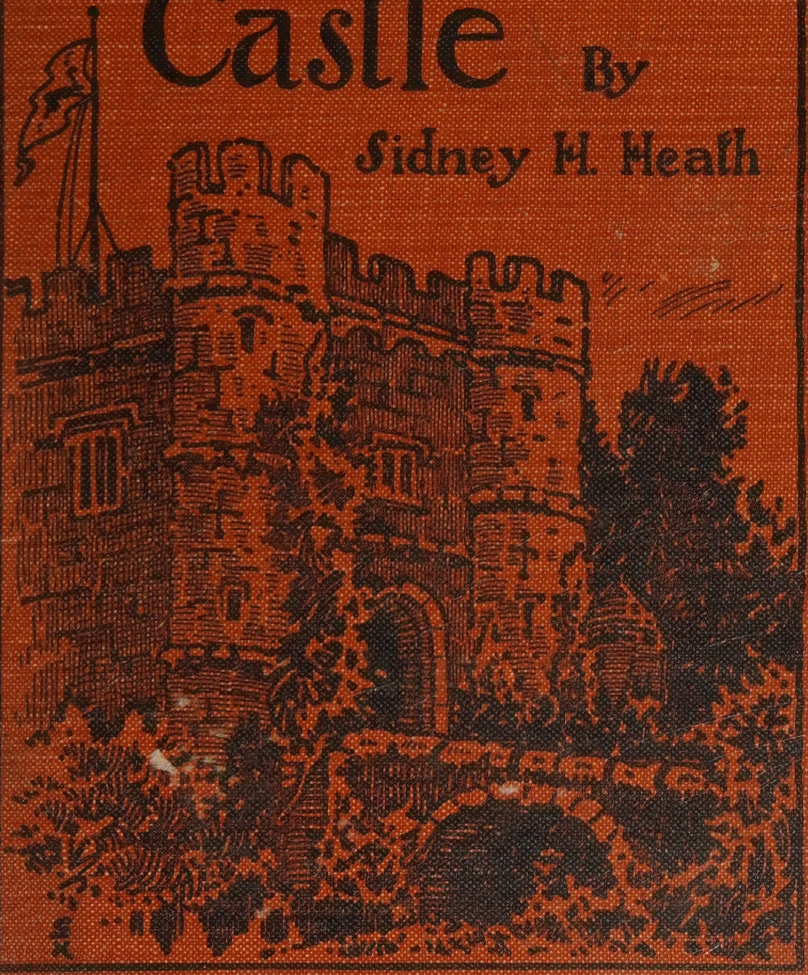
The Parts of a Castle

By

Sidney H. Heath



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THE HOMES AND BUILDINGS OF OTHER DAYS

Written and Illustrated by

SIDNEY H. HEATH

ART MASTER, PLYMOUTH COLLEGE

Author of "Pilgrim Life in the Middle Ages," "Our Homeland Churches," etc., etc.

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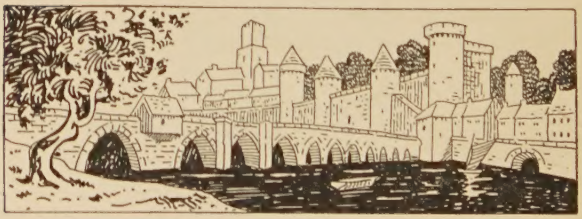

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THE PARTS OF A CASTLE

CHAPTER I

About Castles

IT is not possible, in a small book of this kind, to make more than a passing reference to the early pre-historic strongholds, like Maidun Castle (Dorset), which were made, with an immense expenditure of time and labour, by piling up ramparts of earth divided by deep ditches or *fosses*.

These great camps were constructed for the defence of a large community, and they may be regarded as serving the dual purpose of cattle stations in times of danger, and primitive towns where the inhabitants could do their work in security.

The steep slope of the banks, and the cleverly contrived entrances, rendered them impregnable in the days before siege operations were understood. They could only be captured by hand-to-hand fighting. These earthworks are mainly the work of the New Stone men and the Bronze Age men, although enlarged and strengthened by later races, who, even when they spread over the valleys, kept their hill-fortresses in good repair in order that they could fly to them when danger threatened. A strong stockade, or a hedge of thorns, crowned the innermost bank, or was placed around the edge of the plateau.

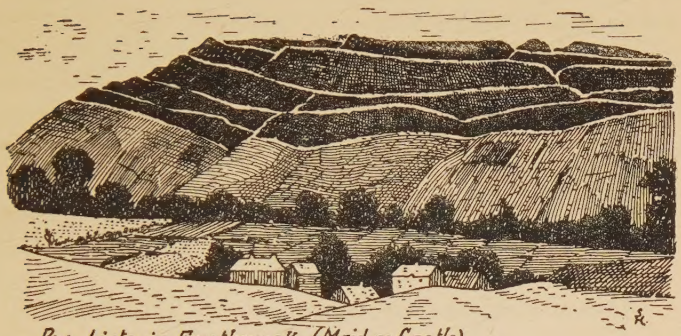
These vast earthworks were of little use to the Romans, whose system of warfare, and knowledge of military architecture, were far in advance of anything known to the British.

In addition to the walls of dressed and cemented stone, with which the Romans surrounded their permanent camps and stations; they erected strong fortresses along the eastern and southern coasts (as at Colchester and Porchester), to guard against the attacks of the Saxon tribes.

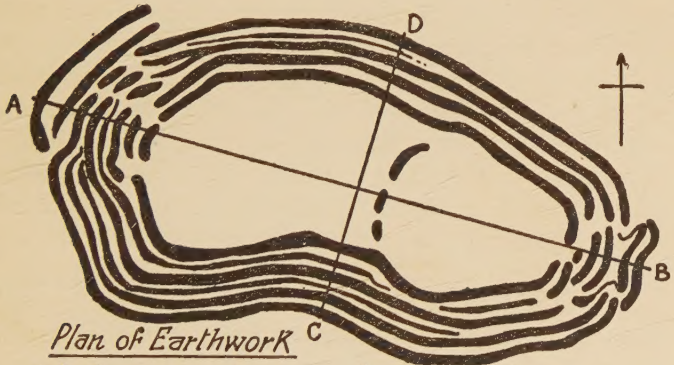
They had also to build the two famous walls in the north to keep back the Picts and Scots. One of these walls was built by the Emperor Hadrian, and the other by the Roman General Agricola. A large part of Hadrian's wall, which extended from the Tyne to Solway Firth, is still standing. A fine Roman *amphitheatre*, or open-air place of amusement, called "Maumbury Rings," remains at Dorchester. It is oval in shape and occupies a space of 218 feet in length and 163 feet in width.

Probably the greatest difference between the prehistoric and the Roman forts was that while the former were isolated strongholds, the settlers in which were always raiding each others territory, the Roman stations were military posts connected by strategic roads, and so forming part of the organised system that was the keynote of Roman policy and the secret of Roman success.

Although the Saxons, who appear to have hated the idea of living within walls, threw up earthen ramparts around a few of their towns, their principal defences consisted of dykes, marsh-land, forests, and rivers, within which boundaries the various tribes



Pre-historic Earthwork (Maidun Castle)



MAIDUN CASTLE (DORSET).

lived; and such strongholds as they may have possessed would, like the pre-historic camps, be communal in character.

The same may be said of the defences thrown up by the Danes, who, in the second period of their invasions, brought their wives and families with them; and it has now been firmly established that the "castle" proper for the defence of the individual, was practically unknown in England until it was imported from Normandy a few years before the Conquest.

In addition to castles erected by landowners to secure their territory and provide a safe dwelling-place for themselves and their families, many fortresses, as those at Old Sarum, Marlborough, and Ludgershall, were royal castles belonging to the Crown or held by constables, and supported by taxation. The bishops were great castle builders, and they, like the kings and the barons, often built castles to protect the townsfolk from whom they drew much of their income. However much the nobles may have despised the traders, they found them too useful to leave without protection, and the same applied to scattered villages, the inhabitants of which made contributions of *castle-guard* rent to the castle of their district.

At Castleton, Derbyshire, in 1158, a porter and two watchmen were paid £4 10*s.* jointly by the Crown. In 1160 at Rockingham Castle a porter and two watchmen received a yearly salary of £4 11*s.* 4*d.*; and at Worcester, in 1163, the only watchman employed was paid £1 10*s.* 5*d.* a year.

These salaries appear to have been paid by the Crown to the sheriffs of the counties in which the

MONMOUTH CASTLE (RESTORED).

castles were situated. In some castles watchmen and porters seem to have been the only officials in permanent residence. The watchmen lived in the upper room of the keep, so that they could give signals of approaching danger by blowing a horn, ringing a bell, or lighting a beacon fire ; so that those who had been taxed for the building, repair, and maintenance of their local castle, could find shelter within it until the danger was past.

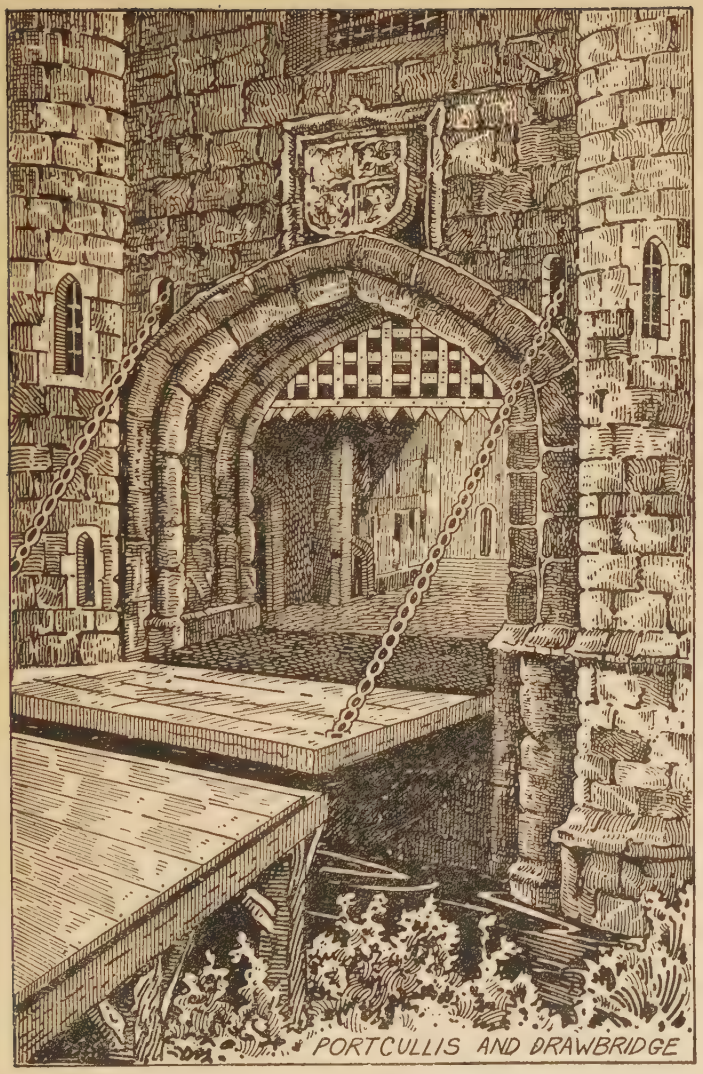
Ignoring the pre-historic fortresses, and the camps of the Romans, Saxons, and Danes, we shall find that the castles of England fall into six well-defined groups. (1) The Motte and Bailey Castle. (2) The Rectangular Keep. (3) The Shell Keep. (4) The Transition-Norman Castle. (5) The Edwardian Castle. (6) The Castle-residence, in which the domestic element is about equally balanced by the military. After this last the castles became more and more large palatial residencies in which the fortifications took a secondary place, or were used to keep up what may be termed " castle tradition."

The student may care to have the following classification of defensive works drawn up by the Committee of *Ancient Earthworks and Fortified Enclosures*.

A. Fortresses partly inaccessible, by reason of precipices, cliffs, or water, additionally defended by artificial works, usually known as *promontary fortresses.*

B. Fortresses on hill-tops, with artificial defences, following the natural line of the hill, and known as *contour fortresses.*

C. Rectangular or other simple enclosures, in-



PORTCULLIS AND DRAWBRIDGE

cluding forts and towns of the Romano-British period.

D. Forts consisting only of a mound with encircling moat or fosse.

E. Fortified mounds, either artificial or partly natural, with traces of an attached court or bailey.

F. Homestead moats, such as abound in some lowland districts, consisting of simple enclosures formed into artificial islands by watermoats.

G. Enclosures, mostly rectangular, partaking of the form of F., but protected by stronger defensive works, ramparted and fossed, and in some instances provided with outworks.

H. Ancient village sites protected by walls, ramparts or fosses.

The headpieces of the chapters show some of the old castles as they appeared before they fell into ruins, or were destroyed.

CHAPTER II

Early Norman Castles

THE Normans, who landed on our shores in 1066, were, like the Romans before them, few in number as compared with the native population; and it being at all times, but especially then, a difficult matter to recruit the forces of an invading army, it was essential to adopt every available means to economise the expenditure of military force.

The Normans overcame this difficulty by the erection of small strongholds, or "motte and bailey" castles, all over the land. The average height of the mounds is forty feet, and the average area of the baileys, three acres. The first of these castles were erected at Richard's Castle and Ewyas Harold, by Norman barons to whom Edward the Confessor had given estates in Herefordshire.

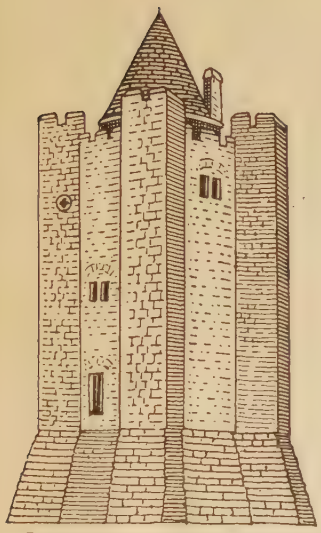
When the mound had been thrown up a small "donjon," or keep of wood, was built on its flattened top, and at its foot a moat was made where a supply of water was available. The bailey also was surrounded by a moat or by a dry ditch and wooden palisades. The citadel formed the home of the lord, while huts and sheds in the bailey housed the retainers and stores.

A MOTTE AND BAILEY CASTLE

A ladder of wood went from the outer edge of the mound-moat to the citadel. These small forts protected the household from enemies, while the citadel on the mound gave the lord security from his discontented retainers. The first change would be to substitute a stone wall for the outer palisading, which was liable to destruction by fire. In a few cases the wooden citadel also was replaced by one of stone, as at Christchurch and Plympton, but in the majority of cases wood, being cheap and easily procured, was retained for the inner buildings.

Remains of these mound and bailey castles can still be seen all over the country—Ongar, Stafford, Plympton, Okehampton, Wallingford, Stafford being but a few of the seventy-two thrown up during the eleventh century; and they constituted, as Mrs. Armitage* tells us, "the first links in the long chain with which the Normans established their hold on the land."

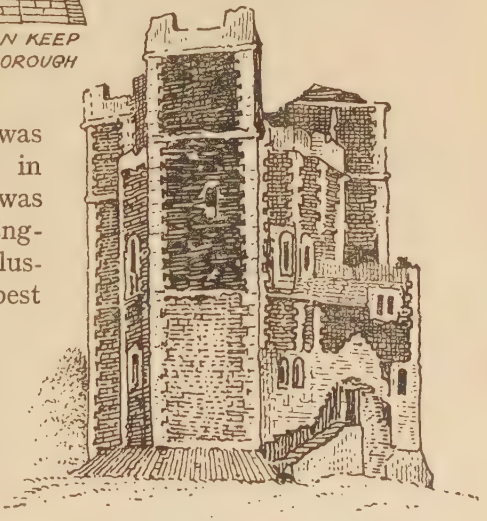
* *The Early Norman Fortress in England.*



TRANSITION-NORMAN KEEP (RESTORED) CONISBOROUGH

These little castles were followed by massive rectangular keeps which remained until the close of the twelfth century, when they gave way to those of round formation, known as "shell" keeps, as we shall see in another chapter.

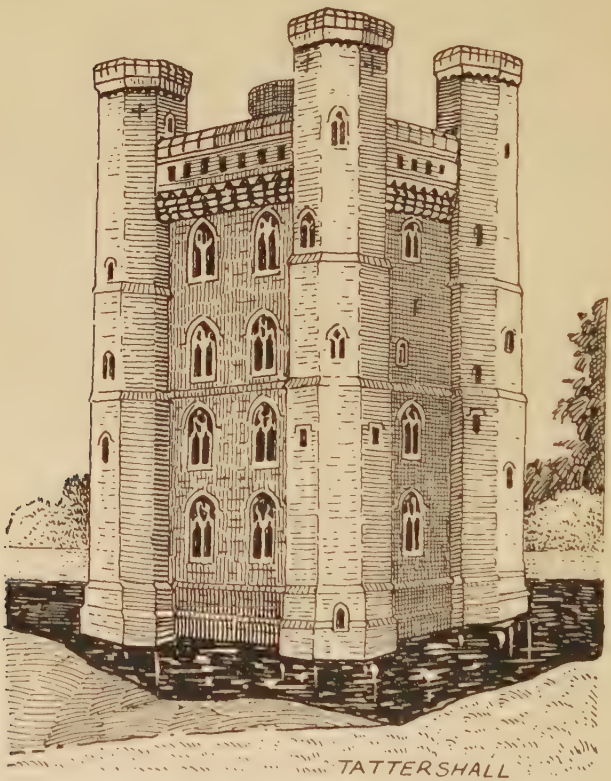
We have also a few examples of keeps like those at Conisborough * and Orford (illustrated), which represent the transition from Norman to Early English. This type of castle was much favoured in France, but it was rarely used in England, the two illustrated being our best



RUINS OF TRANSITION-NORMAN KEEP, ORFORD

* The illustration of this keep is based on that given in *Mediæval Military Architecture*, by G. T. Clark (1884), and the illustration of Harlech Castle (p. 22) is drawn from the same source.

examples of these cylindrical keeps, which were also built at Brunless and Tretower.



CHAPTER III

The Keep

ALTHOUGH some writers differentiate between what they call "domestic" keeps and "military" keeps, we must remember that all keeps (with the exception of those castles inhabited only by watchmen) were domestic keeps, since they formed the residence of the castle owner and his family; and this is true of a small "motte and bailey" fortress as of a massive building like the "King's Tower" at Corfe.

The keep, which is often termed the "castle," was but a part of a series of fortifications, a portion only of a vast stronghold; and resorted to by the garrison in times of pressing danger.

A castle was made up of a central building, or keep; upper and lower wards, or baileys, with walls, gates, barbicans and ditches, intended to promote the general safety.

Some castles occupied a considerable area. Norwich covered a space of twenty-three acres, and Lincoln almost as many, as no fewer than one hundred and sixty-six houses were pulled down to clear the ground for its erection.

The site chosen was usually an elevated spot

often protected by nature on two or more sides, and, excepting where the ground was very precipitous, a ditch, or a moat, was made around the enclosure.

A RECTANGULAR KEEP

ROCHESTER.

On the inside of the ditch a strong wall or curtain was raised. This was sometimes thirty feet high with a thickness of from six to eight feet. Occasionally there were two, or even three walls, each provided with a moat, as was the case at Norwich. Immediately within the outer walls were the garrison buildings and store-rooms. The keep itself was often placed in the centre of the fortification, as at Norwich, London, and Newcastle; but at Porchester it is on an angle of the castle wall, and at Richmond it secures the entrance into the outer bailey. The keep was usually placed upon ground higher than the rest of the fortress, and sometimes a faced mound was made from the material taken out of the ditches. The general form of the earlier Norman keeps nearly approached a square, and in castles of the larger class, a small tower is attached to the main structure to defend the entrance.

ENTRANCE TO KEEP, ARUNDEL.

The cautious policy of the Normans suggested that the doorway of the keep should be at a considerable elevation, but exceptions occur at Colchester and Bamborough, where the doorways are on the ground floor.

As a rule the doorway was in the second storey; at Newcastle it is in the third, and in large castles the doorways were often protected by small towers at the sides.

Where windows are introduced they are merely loop-holes in the lower storeys, but they become larger in the upper ones. At Newcastle the windows of the third storey are provided with double lights, which could be closed with shutters in times of siege.

In large keeps the interiors are usually divided into two or three compartments by strong stone walls, rising from the ground to the top of the building. The white tower in the Tower of London is divided into three sections, and the interior of Rochester keep into two. The floors of each storey, excepting the

THE KEEP OF NEWCASTLE

lowest, were of wood, and access from one to the other was gained either by a newel stairway or by ladders, and in addition to the principal apartments numerous small chambers (or garde-robes) were made in the thickness of the wall.

Fireplaces are found in some keeps but not in others. Rochester has one in each of the larger rooms. On the other hand, none have been found in the keep of Richmond, and only one in the Tower. It is possible that charcoal braziers were used where no fireplaces existed.

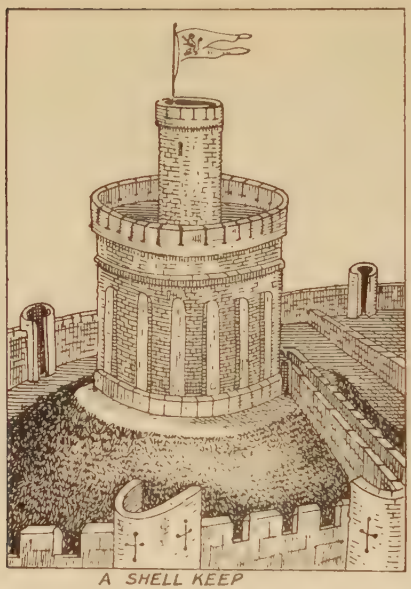
Wells of water were essential if a castle were to maintain a siege, and the needs of the garrison required that water should be obtainable in the topmost storeys.

THE RUINED KEEP OF CORFE

At Rochester the pipe from the well goes from the ground to the top of the building, and a similar arrangement existed in the keep of Carlisle Castle.

The storey in the keep which was called the hall was the general living- and sleeping-room of all the inmates, excepting perhaps the heads of the household, who may have sought a certain amount of privacy on another floor of the building.

Such was the general character of the Norman rectangular keeps, which lasted until the close of the twelfth century, when the round or "shell" keeps began to be built, after a few experiments had been tried, as at Orford, where Henry II built the polygonal keep already alluded to.



A SHELL KEEP

With the improvement of engines of war like the battering ram, the corners of towers and keeps became vulnerable, and the salient angles were also liable to destruction by sap and mine.

The round keep (having no corners) was easier to defend and it would also deflect heavy missiles.

Both types of castles remained until we come to the keepless fortresses of the Edwardian era, which are regarded as the masterpieces of mediæval fortifications.

Remains of rectangular keeps exist all over the country, as at Rochester, Norwich, Newcastle, Richmond, Ludlow, Corfe, to mention but a few. Shell keeps were probably more numerous at one time than those of square formation, but they have been much altered, and are rarely found in anything like their original state. They were built, among other places, at Ongar, Berkeley, Carisbrooke, Totnes, Restormel, and Windsor.

CHAPTER IV

Edwardian and Later Castles

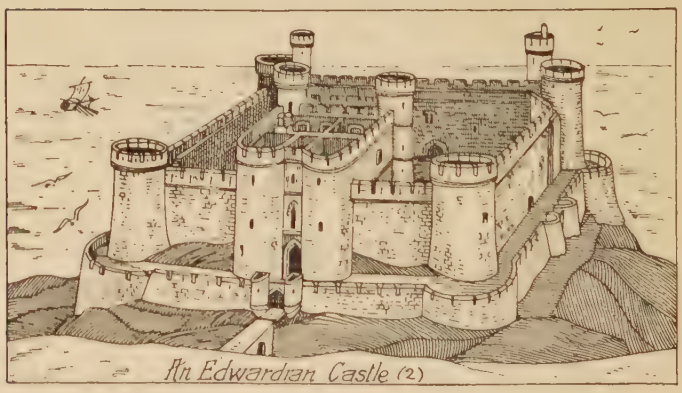
THE term "Edwardian" has been applied to that style of concentric fortress which followed the keep-castle, and carried forward the art of fortification to the Decorated period of English architecture; and although the fortress of Caerphilly was planned on concentric lines before Edward I came to the throne, it is to him we owe the magnificent castles of Conway, Caernarvon, Harlech, and Beaumaris.

In these buildings the keep, the principal feature of the earlier castles, was dispensed with, and in its place came a gatehouse-castle placed in a square or an oblong court, encircled by a strong wall with towers at the angles. Every part of these castles was suitable for daily use, and no portion was set aside as a last resort for a hard-pressed garrison. They may be termed gatehouse-palaces, in which the hall was the principal living-room, although the domestic element was still subordinated to military needs.

Caernarvon (1), and Harlech (2), are illustrated. Harlech is shown as it appeared when first built; but Caernarvon is in much the same condition to-day as it was when completed.

AN EDWARDIAN CASTLE (1)

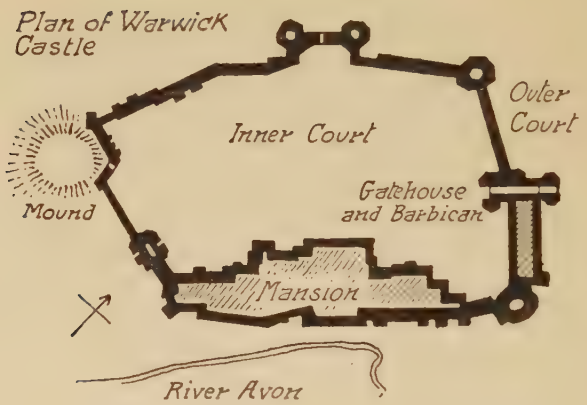
CAERNARVON.



An Edwardian Castle (2)

HARLECH (RESTORED).

We are now nearing the time when domestic comfort was beginning to encroach more and more on purely military requirements, and of this type of castle Kenilworth is about as good as any we had; and one that stands mid-way between the Edwardian



TOWER AND BARBICAN
WARWICK

fortress, and the castle-mansions of Warwick and Hurstmonceaux, in which domestic comfort and military needs are about equally balanced. When first built, each of these castles combined a palatial residence with an impregnable fortress.

The vast castle of Warwick was erected partly at the end of the fourteenth century, but not completed until the fifteenth, and even to-day the walls, barbican, towers, and battlements remain perfect. Looking at the plan, we see the dwelling-house protected by the river on one side, and by the fortifications on the other sides. This stronghold was originally a "motte and bailey" castle, of which the mound remains outside the northern tower.

Berkeley Castle is another good example of the same period, and almost as perfect, although differing in plan.

We have a few rather eccentric buildings which might almost be called "toy" castles, as the one illustrated of Tattershall Castle,* Lincs., and built about the middle of the fifteenth century.

Here we have a Norman keep treated in a Gothic manner, with corner turrets, and battlements; the whole surrounded by a moat. The large size of the windows, however, indicates that this castle was not built for serious defence.

Warkworth Castle, and Middleton Tower, Norfolk, are other examples of these moated towers, which have much in common with the pele-towers of Ireland and Scotland, in that they were fortified dwellings.

Tattershall Castle was built by Ralph Cromwell, lord High Treasurer of Henry VI. The bricks of which

* See p. 14.

RUINS OF KENILWORTH CASTLE

it was made came from the fens of Holland to the sister fenland of Lincolnshire. In 1911 the castle was sold to an American, and in September of that year it was taken down brick by brick prior to its removal to the United States, thus proving at once the efficacy of wealth, and the poor patriotism with which we guard our precious heritage.*

We thus see that the castle proper began with the "motte and bailey" type, and ended with the castle-mansion of Warwick, after which came a large number of beautiful residences, with defensive attributes tacked on more for embellishment than for practical purposes.

* During the process Tattershall Castle was bought for the nation by the late Lord Curzon, and such portions of the edifice as had been removed were replaced and the whole structure carefully restored.

OXFORD CASTLE

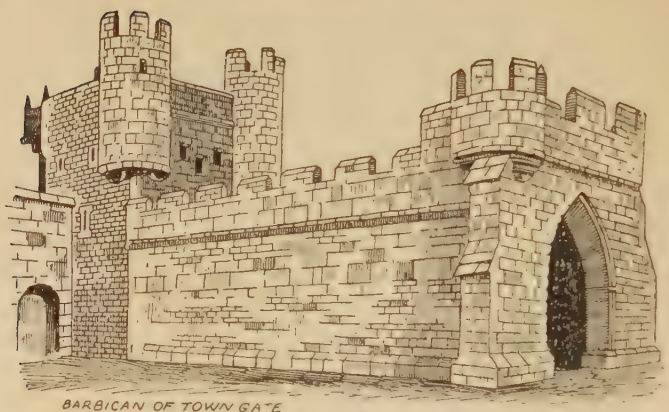
CHAPTER V

The Barbican and other Defences

THE Barbican was usually an outwork for the better defence of a gate or drawbridge, and it may be likened to a narrow lane walled in at the sides, as may be seen by the illustration of the exterior of the barbican at Walmgate-bar, York, and the interior of that at Warwick Castle. Others are at Carlisle, Alnwick, and Richmond castles.

Grose, an old writer, says " To begin from without, the first member of an ancient castle was the barbican. It had no positive place, except that it was always an outwork, and frequently advanced beyond the ditch ; to which it was then joined by a drawbridge, and formed the entrance into the castle. Barbicans are mentioned in Framlingham and Canterbury castles. For the repairing of this work, a tax called *barbecanage* was levied on certain lands."

Bodiam Castle has a small defence called the barbican, and Carlisle Castle had one covering the main gate. At Bridgnorth the barbican contained a kitchen. There is a street in London, near Red-cross Street, called the Barbican from a watch-tower that stood there. Milton once lived in the Barbican,



YORK.

INTERIOR OF BARBICAN

WARWICK.

and Spelman, the antiquary, died there in 1640. Plymouth also has a street called the Barbican.

Spenser, in the *Faerie Queene*, has :

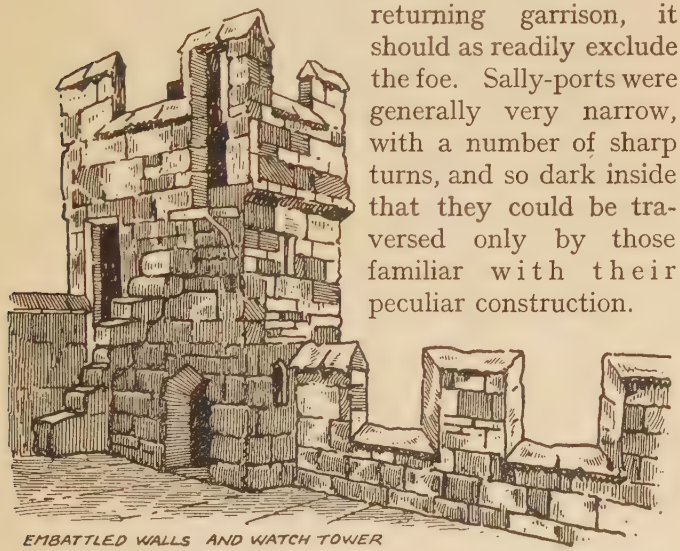
" Within the barbican a porter sate,
Day and night duly keeping watch and ward."

In the time of Henry V, an unknown writer, describing the fortifications of Harfleur, says :—" Before the entrance of each of the three gates, the

prudence of the enemy had erected a strong defence, which we term a barbican," and Lydgate says in his *Story of Thebes* :—

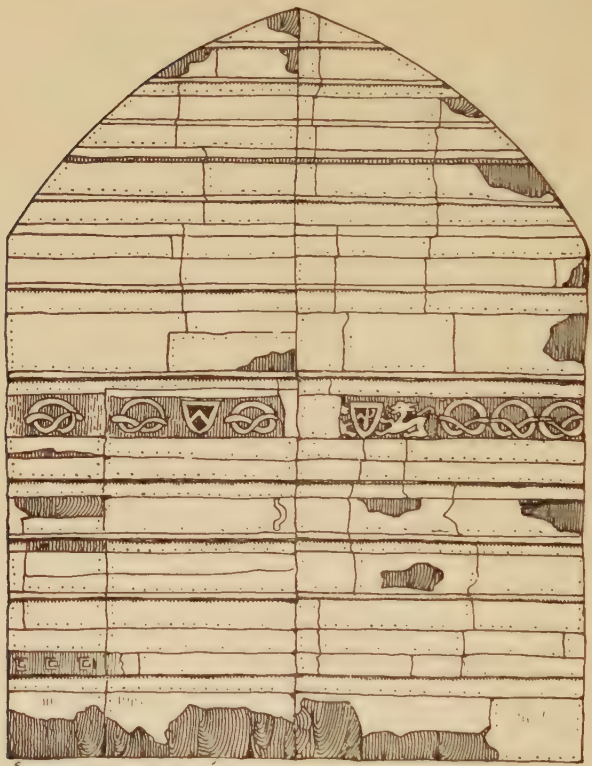
> " And made also by werkmen that were trew,
> Barbicans and bulwerkes, strong and new,
> Barreres, chains, and ditches wonder deepe,
> Making his anow (vow) the city for to keepe."

The *Sally-port* was an important part of a castle. Whilst the attention of the besieging forces was concentrated upon a particular point, like the storming of the main entrance, a detachment of the beleaguered garrison would issue out by some concealed doorway, and attack them from the rear. It was of course essential that, whilst the sally-port was so planned as readily to admit the returning garrison, it should as readily exclude the foe. Sally-ports were generally very narrow, with a number of sharp turns, and so dark inside that they could be traversed only by those familiar with their peculiar construction.



EMBATTLED WALLS AND WATCH TOWER

BASED ON NAWORTH CASTLE.



A CASTLE DOOR (sheathed with iron)
MAXTOKE.

The *Battlement* is a parapet on the top of a wall, having notches in it from which arrows and other missiles could be discharged at besiegers below. The raised portions are called *merlons*, and the notches *embrasures*. Sometimes the merlon is pierced with a small opening called a *crenelle*. The merlon was for

the purpose of protecting the soldier while discharging his weapon through the embrasure.

The *Alure*, or rampart-walk, is strictly the alley, passage or flat gutter behind a battlemented parapet, and wide enough to enable any one to walk round the tops of the walls.

The *Bartizans* were small projecting turrets, often of wood, and pierced with holes for archers to shoot through. Compton Castle, Devon, has a number of good examples.

The *Bailey* was the open space between the outer and inner lines of a castle or fort. When there were more than one they were known as the Inner and Outer Baileys. The name has survived in the "Old Bailey," London; and in the Upper and Nether Baileys at Colchester.

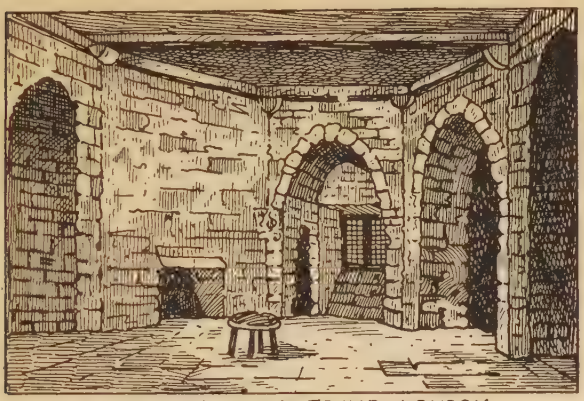
The *Portcullis* was usually a strong-framed grating of oak, having the lower points shod with iron shoes. In the smaller gateways the whole was often of iron. The Portcullis was hung so as to slide up and down in grooves, and it was worked by heavy weights. Portcullises do not appear to have become general in England until the twelfth century, although they were used in Italy, for defence against the Saracens, long before that date. The Portcullis, or *altera securitas*, appears on the badge of the House of Somerset.

Castle doors were naturally as strong as they could be made. At Maxtoke Castle, Warwickshire, there are two of the original doors (one of which is illustrated), sheathed with iron. Each is five feet wide and twelve feet high to the point of the arch. Across the middle of the door runs a band of embossed

A CASTLE STAIRWAY (WARDOUR)

plates of iron, and his arms, with those of his lady, to be embossed thereon, with two antelopes his supporters; and in further memory that the gates were strengthened and beautified by him, he caused the burning nave and knot, the ancient badges heraldic devices. These doors were made in 1346, the year in which the castle was built. In 1432, Lord Maxtoke exchanged his castle with Humphrey, Earl of Stafford (afterwards Duke of Buckingham), for Wishton and Wodeford, Northants. This is recorded by Dugdale, who also tells us:—"The Earl of Stafford caused the gates to be covered with

DOORWAY IN THE TOWER



ROOM IN THE BEAUCHAMP TOWER, LONDON

of his ancestors, to be embossed in the iron-work."

We have abundant evidence that the working of iron and steel was much practised in this country long before the coming of the Normans. In the courts of the Saxon and the Welsh kings the chief smith was an officer of considerable importance, and one who enjoyed many privileges. In the Welsh court the king's smith had a seat next the chaplain, and he was entitled to a drink of every kind of liquor that was brought into the hall.

The drawbridge was an important, although minor, feature in castle defence, and the modes of working it varied. Usually, in small castles, chains were attached and passed through holes in the portals, the bridge being raised and lowered by weights or counterpoises. In large castles the arrangements were more complicated, and the working was done in a room above the gateway.

Heading Block and Axe in the Tower

Where castles were situated on rivers, or had wide moats that could not be spanned by bridges, entrance was gained through "water-towers" by boats, as you will see by the illustration,* which is based on a drawing by Mr. W. D. Caroe, showing the Castle of Monmouth restored. The illustration of a "Portcullis and Drawbridge" † is explanatory, and is of no particular castle.

It is now generally agreed that the dungeons found in many old castles were Edwardian additions. The Normans had little use for these underground prisons. If they caught a foe worthy of serious attention they usually put him to death.

The castle stairway illustrated is at the old Castle of Wardour, Wilts., and it is known as the "Grand stair." This castle was built by Lord Lovel in 1392, by special licence from Richard II, and the entrance to the stairway is a Renaissance addition.

* See p. 7. † See p. 9.

CHAPTER VI

The Armoury

BEFORE the invention of gunpowder the methods of attacking fortresses and walled towns were by catapults, slings, borers, and battering-rams; the soldiers working the last two being often protected by a pent-house, or small roof of wood or thatch.

Where there was no moat the ditch had to be filled in with earth or with hurdles before the gate could be reached, and when it was so filled, the uplifted drawbridge formed an additional barrier. A closed gate was attacked with battle-axe and fire; and whilst these modes of forcing an entrance were being applied, the garrison, from the battlements, were heaving heavy stones, and pouring hot lime, molten lead, and boiling oil, on to the casqued heads of their assailants.

The application of gunpowder for projectiles is thought to have originated in Italy about 1326, and the first mention of fire-arms in France occurs in 1338, on the breaking out of war between that country and England. The English are credited with having first used cannon for field pieces, as distinct from their previous use as siege guns.

From an Italian historian, Villani, we learn that the English army at Crecy had three cannon loaded with iron balls. The balls for large cannon were frequently of stone, or stone coated with lead, and large quantities of stone cannon balls came from the quarries of Kent.

The first cannon were very small, so small that the cannonier held the gun in his hand while firing it. The illustration (from a MS. of the reign of Edward IV) depicts a soldier holding one of these cannon as he applies a match to the touch-hole. After a few discharges the metal would become too hot to hold, so later the gun was attached to a wooden stock, and in this way originated our modern rifles and guns.

When the match was applied to the touch-hole by a trigger, this addition (an Italian invention) gave rise to the "match-lock." The "wheel-lock" was another Italian invention.

The earliest large cannon were hooped, and the first cannon to be cast in one piece was made by Ralph Hogge, at Buxted, Sussex, in 1543. News of this achievement soon reached the Continent, and large orders came from the French, who returned the compliment with interest when they bombarded Sussex coast towns with guns of Sussex make.

This resulted in the government taking bonds of £1,000 from the owners of the Sussex furnaces in order that no cannon should be exported without licence.

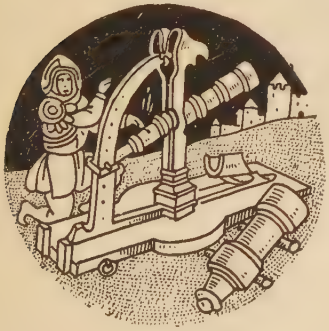
In a castle armoury were kept armour, bills, cross-bows, daggers, battle-axes, pikes, and other military weapons. The armoury in the Tower is a very fine one, as also is that at Warwick Castle.

The sword, as a fighting weapon, has a place and

dignity of its own, far above that of any other lethal weapon. With the sword alone many men have carved their way to fortune or to fame. Some ancient swords are engraved on the blades with mottoes, such as, " Do not draw me without reason : do not sheath me without honour."

It is with the sword, the aristocrat of fighting weapons, that the King to-day confers the honour of knighthood on his subjects.

From the time of the Crusades to the sixteenth century, armour was worn only by the mounted knights ; and the retainers, who were foot soldiers, were badly armed and poorly equipped until the trained bands of archers were organised.

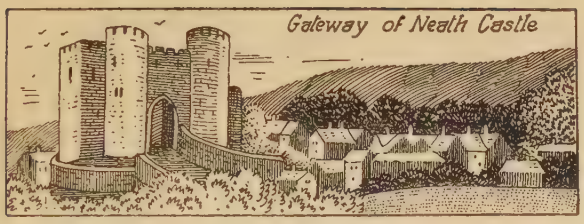


The arms and armour seen to-day in castle armouries and museums were used until the invention of fire-arms rendered

them obsolete, or caused them to be retained for purely ornamental purposes, as with the helmets and breastplates of our Lifeguards.

CHAPEL IN THE TOWER

LONDON



CHAPTER VII

Chapels

A CHAPEL seems to have formed an integral part of a feudal castle, and it ill accords with our modern ideas of consistency to find buildings so replete with contrivances for the slaughter and the torture of the foe, so well provided with chapels for the performance of religious duties.

An unknown writer has said of the Normans :— " To pray for mercy one hour, and be most merciless the next ; to glorify the Giver of all good, as the most fitting preparation for the dispensation of all evil ; to enshrine their hopes of salvation on the altar of Christ, while they pressed forward to the mortal end of all through an almost continuous life of rapine, violence, and strife."

We often find two chapels, one in the bailey for the general household, and the other a private oratory in the keep, and reserved for the orisons of the lord and his family. At Newcastle the chapel is under the stairs, and is a building of singular beauty as

compared with the rest of the fabric. At Colchester the chapel is a spacious apartment of great massiveness; while that in the White Tower (London) is the finest and earliest castle-chapel we have. It is large, and has a nave, aisles, and apse, all vaulted.

The chapel had no special position. At Castle Rising it is on the first floor of the keep; and at Guildford and Brougham it was in the wall. At Prudhoe it was over the gateway.

Occasionally it is a detached building standing in the principal court, as at Ludlow, where, however, only the circular chancel (illustrated) remains. Ludlow Castle was the early residence of Edward IV, and the cradle of his infant sons.

A CASTLE CHAPEL (CHANCEL ONLY)

LUDLOW

CARDIFF CASTLE

CHAPTER VIII

The Story of Corfe Castle

FEW things are more interesting than the history of an old feudal castle, even when it is now in ruins, for that very circumstance impresses upon the mind the varying fortunes with which it has been so long associated, and the leading events that have marked its career.

Situated in the very heart of Purbeck (Dorset) and surrounded by low, green hills, stands Corfe Castle, probably the strongest mediæval fortress (with the exception of the Tower of London) ever erected in this country. The site is one which is secluded as lying in a valley, but has all the advantages that an isolated hill affords.

That there was a fortification here in Saxon days is possible, although not a trace of pre-Conquest work remains. The castle, as shown by the illustration, was begun by the Normans, and finished by later builders, the imposing residential keep being built long after the walls and towers.

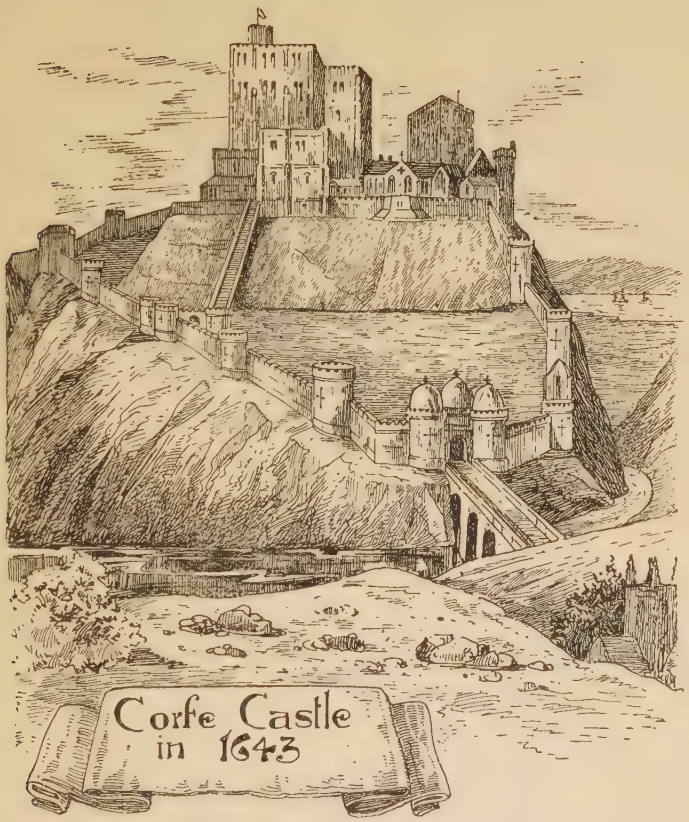
In 948, King Edred gave the hill on which the castle stands to the Abbots of Shaftesbury, who kept it until 1075, when it was given to William the Con-

queror in exchange for the church of Gillingham. The outer wall of the castle was built as near the edge of the hill as possible, and every few yards massive round towers were built into it. The entrance consisted of a gateway tower flanked by side towers. The moat was dug around the foot of the hill and filled with water from a neighbouring stream.

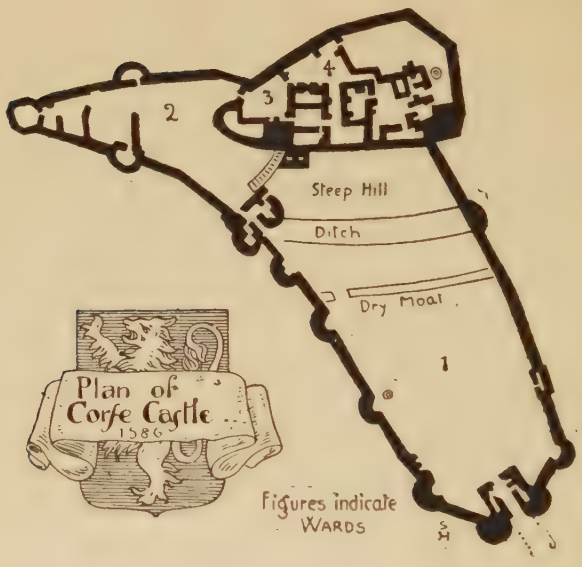
As the plan given shows, the space *intra muros*, or within the walls, was divided into baileys or wards, each of which was a stronghold in itself.

The first ward was supplied with a well of water, and a bridge across another moat led to the Castle Ditch, said to have been cut by order of King John. Beyond the ditch is a steep rocky hill on the top of which stood the imposing buildings of the keep, rising far above the other portions of the castle. Just within the gateway leading to the second ward was a stone stairway that led directly to the King's Tower. This second ward was triangular in plan, and protected by three towers, two round, and the third, at the apex, octagonal; which last was used as a prison for criminals and persons of low rank. A strongly-fortified gateway gave entrance to the third ward containing the keep. Here stood the King's Tower, eighty feet high, and with a wall twelve feet thick. At one time this tower was used as a State prison. Around the tower were grouped the numerous domestic buildings, and on the opposite side of the ward was the Queen's Tower, connected with the Banqueting Hall and with the kitchens. The fourth ward was of small dimensions, and at its eastern end was a garden with another well of water.

That the murder of Edward the Martyr (the details



of which are too familiar to be repeated here) took place on or about the spot where Corfe Castle now stands is generally admitted. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tells us that the cruel deed took place at *Corfesgate*, where stood Elfrida's house, probably a small wooden building of which all traces have



vanished ; and although we may not know the exact spot where Edward received the fatal dagger-thrust, we do know that his body lay for one year at Wareham, in a chapel displaced later by the present parish church. In the English Chronicle, under date 979, we may read :—" In this year was King Edward slain at even-tide at Corfegate, on the 15th before the Kalends of April, and then was he buried at Wareham, without any kind of kingly honours."

And again under date 980 :—" In this year St. Dunstan and Alfere, the earldormen, fetched the holy king's body, St. Edward's, from Wareham, and bore it with much solemnity to Shaftesbury."

When she heard of Edward's death, Elfrida retired to Bere Regis, near Dorchester, where she lived in seclusion. We have few records of Corfe until the reign of King John, who had several hunting-lodges in Dorset. When this monarch realised that the barons were getting restless under his misrule, he moved his court, his crown jewels and regalia, to this strong Dorset Castle, which, a little later, he turned into a State prison. After Prince Arthur of Brittany had been put to death at Rouen, his sister Eleanor, and twenty-two others of noble birth were taken to Corfe, and here Eleanor died after forty years of captivity. During her imprisonment she had as companions in misfortune, Margery and Isabel, daughters of William, king of Scotland. On the death of John, Corfe passed to the Earl of Pembroke, the guardian of the nine-year-old king, Henry III ; and shortly after Edward II came to the throne, workmen were sent from London to fit up the castle for his residence ; but when he went there it was as a prisoner, pending his removal to Berkeley Castle, where he was foully murdered. In the time of Edward III, Corfe was held by the Earl of Kent, and then passed to several nobles in turn, including the unfortunate Duke of Clarence, who is said to have been drowned in a butt of Malmsey wine. Queen Elizabeth sold the castle to Sir Christopher Hatton, who commanded the Dorset ships that helped to destroy the Spanish Armada. The last important event in the history of the castle took place while it was in the possession of Sir John and Lady Bankes during the Great Civil War. In 1643, while her husband was away, Lady Bankes and a few serving men, held the castle for

CORFE TOWN AND CASTLE

six weeks against the pick of the Parliamentary troops, and it was only through the treachery of Colonel Pitman, a Royalist officer who had been sent to help her, that the fortress fell. So struck were the Roundheads with the bravery of Lady Bankes, that she and the survivors were allowed to depart with the full honours of war; but the House of Commons passed a resolution ordering so strong a Royalist castle to be destroyed. The towers were blown up with gunpowder, or so undermined that they fell of their own weight. The ruins were then plundered, many Dorset houses were built with its stones; while the lead was sold to a plumber at Poole.

Even to-day the ruins are magnificent, although but fragments of the historic edifice of which they formed a part. Corfe town, now called a village, is a sleepy little place that seems content to live on the memories of other days, for never again can the stormy scenes of warfare, or the clash of sword and spear, bring to it prosperity or renown. The plan given of the castle has been drawn from one made by Ralph Treswell in 1586, and preserved, with many

other relics, at Kingston Lacey, the present seat of the Bankes family.

" The Earth goeth on the Earth, glistening like gold,
The Earth goeth to the Earth, sooner than it would,
The Earth builds on the Earth, castles and towers,
The Earth says to the Earth, ' all shall be ours.' "

Shield of the Black Prince in Canterbury Cathedral

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